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[Stevenson's Speech - June 5 - 1896]

WON HIS AUDITORS

Vice President Stevenson Made a Notable Speech.

Earned Hearty Applause

Address to Graduates at the State University.

A Brilliant Ball Last Night

The Vice-President Will be in Raleigh To-Day and
Hold a Reception at Yarboro House at 12:30 O'clock.

Chapel Hill, June 4.--(Special)--Back of the great Memorial Hall there were all sorts of vehicles, including the covered army-wagon type of years ago. The horses were tied to the tail-boards, unconscious of their errands.

It all meant that the country people had come from far and near to see the Vice-President of the United States who had just taken his seat on the platform.

Mr. Stevenson and his party entered at precisely 4:30, and the band broke forth into music, which, however, was almost subdued by the applause, spontaneous and vociferous from the thousand who were gathered there.

The country people had not forgotten that A. E. Stevenson was a part of their bone and gristle, one of them, sprung from North Carolina and North Carolinians.

They welcomed him, and so did all the rest of the fashionable audience, the roses quivering in the wide-brimmed hats of the young women as their hands kept tune with their glad greetings.

Following Mr. Stevenson up the centre aisle, he being escorted by President Geo. T. Winston, came General W. E. Cox, Secretary of the United States Senate, accompanied by his Excellency Governor Elias Carr, Mr. F. D.

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Winston and Dr. R. H. Lewis. These were followed by the Trustees.

The platform quickly filled and the hall was in a few moments a compact mass lightened by the color and faces of women from all parts of the State.

Then, too, the windows were shot with a new light, and the sky was dashed with gala blue seemingly in special compliment to the Vice-President. For all day, the air had been leaden and wretchedly laden with rain. But the party arrived at the little station on time all the same.

They came in at 11:30 on a private car from Washington. At Greensboro, the gateway of the State, they had been met by a committee of distinguished North Carolinians.

The party, as it started from Washington, consisted of the Vice-President, accompanied by General W. R. Cox. The women of the party were the daughter of the Vice-President, Miss Letitia Stevenson, Misses Julia and Jane Hardin, of Kentucky, and sisters of young Mr. Hardin to whom Miss Julia Stevenson, another daughter, was married in Washington Tuesday night, and Miss Alexander.

Mr. Stevenson rested during the morning hours, and came to the hall in good form, walking up the aisle with the same kindly expression that is one of his marked characteristics.

The programme was begun without delay, by the presentation of diplomas, which was performed by President Winston.

Then General W. R. Cox advancing to the front of the stage was received with general applause. The General never looked better, nor spoke with more taste and grace. He referred to the Vice-President as one of the most distinguished Americans, to which there was a hearty response, and took

occasion, with the well-known gallantry of his nature, to close his remarks with an exquisite reference to the charming young women who had accompanied the Vice-President and who were now sitting in front.

When Mr. Stevenson arose, the applause was more than applause; there seemed to be more than approbation in it; there was the thrill of welcome in it, and the Vice-President seemed to feel that thrill, and met the impulse at once in a way that put him instantly in warm touch with the North Carolinians who felt a pride in him as belonging partly to them.

Mr. Stevenson could not have hit upon a happier way of opening his remarks than by referring to his coming as somewhat of a return home. The people had been all the time feeling this, and now they were one with the speaker, whose every word henceforth, was full of glow, of cheer, of strength and, best of all, of Tar Heelishness. North Carolina names and North Carolina counties glittered through the opening sentences. The speaker was dressed in full black, with coat of Prince Albert cut, standing collar and plain black tie. He read his remarks, using his eye-glasses constantly.

At the close Mr. Stevenson left his notes and addressed himself directly and with feeling to the Senior class, declaring with emphasis that no dishonor would ever come to the State of North Carolina. Mr. Stevenson sat down amidst genuine enthusiasm. He had left the most delightful impression and was soon to shake hands with the people, according to the programme that had been mapped out in the morning.

After some felicitous baseball hits by President Winston, that gentleman took occasion to refer to the happiness of all at having the Vice-President among them, and referring to the inclement weather, he exclaimed: "Had not the rain prevented, the Vice-President would have seen

a greater audience than is here gathered. He would have seen this campus filled with the yeomanry of Durham, Alamance, Orange and Chatham--the type of men among whom his ancestors had helped to fight the battles of Eastern North Carolina." This was met with applause, and at the next instant the audience was thrown into a hurrah by "Dicie" from the band.

According to announcement the Vice-President, accompanied by Gen. Cox, now took his position at the entrance-door, and in the midst of music, General Cox presented each one of the vast audience to Mr. Stevenson, who shook their hand warmly, giving each one some cordial word of greeting.

A new arrangement was hit later, namely that after spending the night here, the Vice-President and party should go to Raleigh in the morning where they will spend the day.

(Here follows a long list of alumni, trustees, and other friends taking seats on the rostrum.)

...After the oration of Mr. R. P. Jenkins [Senior class], the Stevenson party arrived. The Vice-President went at once to Dr. Winston's house to gain a few hours' rest before his address, and the ladies, Miss Letitia Stevenson, Miss Alexander, Miss Jane Hardin and Miss Julia Hardin, both of Kentucky, accompanied by General Cox and the committee of trustees, were accompanied from the station direct to Memorial Hall.

The order of exercises as prescribed by the programme was then taken up. After the orations, Dr. Winston read the subjects and writers of the theses presented for graduation by those not delivering orations.

It was then announced by Dr. Winston that Vice-President Stevenson was in the village, and that he being tired, the further exercises of the morning would be suspended until 4 o'clock in the afternoon. He announced further that there would be an informal reception held immediately after the exercises of the evening were over.

THE VICE-PRESIDENT'S SPEECH.

Some Extracts From His Address to the Graduates.

The first twenty minutes of the Vice-President's speech was a pleasant reference to the fact that this was the home of his ancestors, and that he fulfilled a long cherished desire in coming to the University of North Carolina. He adverted to the important epochs in the history of North Carolina, and named the declaration at Mecklenburg in connection with the grant of the Magna Charta at Runnymede. The Vice-President then gave a statesman-like discussion of the adoption of the Constitution, and its perfection as evidenced during the long time it has met the needs of the American people, and the growth and changing conditions of our civilization. Concluding he said:

I trust that no apology is needed for the brief reference to the glorious achievements of our ancestors. One of the greatest of modern writers has truly said: "A people which takes no pride in the noble achievements of remote ancestors, will never achieve anything worthy to be remembered with pride by remote descendants."

Let me here recall, young gentlemen, the words of admonition of Washington as he laid down the great office to which he had been twice elevated by his grateful countrymen. The hundred years that have passed since these words were uttered have not lessened their value.

He said: "The great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign nations, is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible. It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world. Taking

care always to keep ourselves, by suitable establishments, in a respectable defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary purposes. Harmony and liberal intercourse with all nations are recommended by policy, humanity and interest. Constantly keeping in view that it is folly in one nation to look for disinterested favors from another; that it must pay with a portion of its independence for whatever it may accept under that character, there can be no greater error than to expect or calculate upon real favors from nation to nation. It is an illusion which experience must cure, which a just pride ought to discard."

While we believe that "our greatest interest is peace," yet, we cannot close our eyes to the perils that possibly in the near future may come from foreign jealousies and aggressions. Need I remind you that when dangers from abroad threaten, party banners are furled--party names forgotten? In the words of Webster, "Our politics go no further than the water's edge." We study the things that make for peace, but must never forget that worse even than war, with all its horrors, is national dishonor.

It was the earnest prayer of Washington that "Heaven would continue to his countrymen the choicest tokens of its beneficence." May we not believe that our land has been the favored of the Almighty during all the years of our eventful history. "Truly He hath not dealt so with any nation."

It is said that in Venice there is sacredly preserved a letter written by Columbus, a few hours before he sailed from Palos. With reverent expression of trust in God--humbly but with unfaltering faith--he spoke of his past voyage to "that famous land." He builded wiser than he knew. His dream, while a suppliant in the outer chamber of kings, and while keeping lonely vigil upon the deep, was the discovery of a new pathway to

the Indies. Yet, who can doubt that to his prophetic soul was then foreshadowed something of "that famous land," with the warp and woof of whose history, tradition and song, his name and fame are linked for all time. Was it Mr. Winthrop who said of Columbus and his compeers, "They were the pioneers in the march to independence, the precursors in the only progress of freedom, which was to have no backward step." In the modest words of the great navigator, he only "opened the gates," and lo, there came in the builders of a new and mighty nation.

The poet Bryant, upon his farewell visit to his Alma Mater, said: "It has occurred to me since I, in the decline of life, came to visit once more this seat of learning, in which our youths are trained to succeed us on the stage of the world, that I am in the situation of one who, standing on a spot desolate with Winter, and dim with twilight, should be permitted by a sort of miracle to look upon the neighboring region, glorious with the bloom of Spring, and bright with the beams of morning. On the side where I stand are herbless fields and leafless woods, the pools sheeted with ice, the frozen soil, and the shadows of approaching night. On the side to which I look are emerald meadows, fields of springing wheat, orchards in bloom, transparent streams, and genial sunshine."

To those of us who stand where the shadows fall to the eastward, what spectacle more sublime than that of the procession of young men, equipped for the work that awaits them, moving from these halls out upon the broader theatre, with life's highest prizes within their reach--before them possibilities greater than dreamed of in the past. These prizes are yours, but not without effort. "The grand school-master," says Carlyle, "is practice." "Labor," says Adam Smith, "was the first price, the original



purchase money paid for all things."

True, difficulties are in the way, yet it was Burke who said: "Difficulty was the severe instructor set over us by the Supreme ordinance of a parental guardian and legislator, who knows us better than we know ourselves." From a yet higher authority are the words: "Seest thou a man diligent in business, he shall stand before kings."

"America is the heir of all the ages," You, who to-day leave college and university for the broad field where life's battles are to be fought, its prizes won or lost, are the heirs of all that has been wrought out upon this continent by two centuries of suffering, of heroism, of tireless endeavor. What boundless possibilities are before you. It is indeed worth while to live in this favored land during the closing years of the nineteenth century. Standing in its twilight, the retrospect--a government "by the people, and for the people" marching with steady tread, from the lowest to the highest place among the nations of earth; reverently heeding the parting admonition of Washington: "Justice to all nations, entangling alliances with none--peace abiding in its own borders, at peace with, and through its kindly interposition, the arbiter and peace-maker between nations."

"The school-master is abroad," and to the humblest child of toil, without price, are open wide the doors of school and hall, without figure of speech--the doors to the very school-house of knowledge.

To woman has been accorded equal and exact justice before the law. New pathways of endeavor are constantly opening to her; along every line better opportunities for honorable, independent maintenance. I firmly believe that what has been gained for woman is the crowning glory for the closing century.



As to material progress, a single illustration: In 1804, by direction of President Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, with a small detachment of soldiers and guides, started overland for the Pacific ocean. So far as is known, they were the first white men to cross the plains. The greater part of their journey was on mules, and then descended in canoes a tributary of the Missouri, and the latter river to the border. No tidings came from them the little band, and they had long been given up for dead, when three years from the time of their departure they returned with stirring accounts of hair-breadth escapes, and of the wonderful countries they had discovered. Now, the traveller from the same starting point, with little of peril and fatigue, can, by means of the great transcontinental railways, reach the Pacific coast, and return with safety, having travelled as far and beheld wonders even greater within a score of days, than did Lewis and Clark in the famous expedition which made their names immortal.

In science, by the discovery and application of anaesthetics, pain has been alleviated, the torture of the surgeon's knife annihilated, human life prolonged.

All this, and more, it is ours to see; but how glorious the prospect to those just upon the threshold, when in the noon of the twentieth century their eyes behold the added achievements in every pathway of thought, of experiment, of endeavor.

What marvels are bound up in the fifty years lying just before us. It will, indeed, be worth while to live at such a time, to be factors in such great affairs.

In all this, the man of letters, of opportunity, will play no mean part. It will be his to move in the van. To the end that he acquit himself

well, need he be reminded of the imperative necessity for thorough training, for yet higher culture for the task that awaits him.

Recalling the words of Bastiat that "the ogre war costs as much for his digestion as for his meals," is it too much to believe that in the coming centuries the potent voice will be that from university and study, rather than from camp and field. Intellect, not force, will govern.

An eminent writer has said: "Tell me what the student is thinking in his closet, and I will tell you what his countrymen will be doing in the next generation."

As has been said by one whose words are worthy of remembrance. "Faithfulness in the past has given you privileged times in which to live. The work is to go on. The triumph of truth and righteousness are to be carried forward down the course of years. We know not what God

"From out whose hand

The centuries fall like grains of sand,"
may bring to the realization of those who shall live fifty years to come. But we know that if you act your part well, your life will bear its contribution to human welfare, and help to ripen some fruit to human taste, and lovely in the eyes of God. Duty done reaches in its effects down the ages and into eternity. You can live your life but once, and God has given you the privilege of going forth into it, in these earnest days, that you may receive and be blessed by the affluent results which, under his providence, have come out of past endeavor; and in nobly doing your duty, may add some strength to the holy movements that are working out the divine designs on earth."

The century now nearing its close has witnessed the discussion of

questions of vast importance to our republic--questions involving the issues of material progress, of diplomacy, of war; nay, involving human freedom and the maintenance of our national life. Happily these have been solved; but it were idle to doubt that in the pathway of the republic, stretching a half century before us, questions equally difficult, or fraught with consequences less portentous, will arise. With the marvelous increase of population, the rapid accumulation of wealth, the multiplication of monster corporations, corruption in the government of large cities, and the influx of a vicious element into our population--with all these will come questions of as great moment, and no less difficult solution, than any whose happy determination tested the courage and the wisdom of the past generation. In their settlement you are to be factors. It will be yours to stand in the van, and whatever dangers may menace, faithfully to guard and transmit to coming generations, the priceless legacy of free government.





















